(d) if not, reasons for denial of interest free credit to Tamil Nadu dealers;

(e) whether it is a fact that other States like Andhra Pradesh get interest free credit for long periods;

(f) the reasons for this dual policy; and

(g) whether MMTC has encouraged this practice for some reasons?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The quantum of fertilizers sold in Tamil Nadu in 1995-96 and 1996-97 (Upto Jan.'97) is given below:

Fig. in ('000 MT)

Product	1995-96	1996-97 (Upto Jan.'97)
Urea	10.9	18.05
MOP	16.0	19.20

(c) to (g) MMTC's existing policy to extend short term interest free credit to all parties against Bank Guarantee/Letter of Credit. This is uniformly applicable to all States.

Loss due to some diseases to the Pepper Plants

1520. SHRI JOY NADUKKARA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the cultivation of pepper plants are facing a threat to the cultivation due to some diseases which affected the plants during the last few years resulting in destruction of almost all the pepper plants in the districts of Idukky and Wayanadu in Kerala;

(b) which are the areas where pepper cultivation was mostly done; and

(c) the steps Government have taken to help the agriculturists in checking the diseases and to help them financially?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) The major pepper growing districts of Kerala were affected by Quick Wilt disease of pepper.

(b) Black pepper is grown as mono crop to some extent in higher elevation and hill slopes in Idukki & Wyanad districts; and

(c) During the 8th Plan, Deptt. of Agriculture and Cooperation is implementing a Centrally Sponsored Integrated Programme for Development of Spices with an outlay of Rs. 125 crores. Under this programme, for undertaking prophylactic plant protection measures to check the incidence of quick will disease, an allocation of Rs. 27.90 crores has been made for the 8th Plan period. Farmers are provided subsidy to the extent of 50% of the cost of plant protection chemicals, limited to Rs. 1860 per ha.

Freeze of Payment by US for the Import of Urea

1521. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of USA had frozen US $25 million that India was sending to Libya for payment of the import of Urea;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken by India to get the amount released?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The amount involved is US $2.5 million and not US $ 25 million. MMTC had opened a Letter of Credit (L/C) for US $2.5 Million in favour of National Oil Company, Libya for purchase of 13,817 MTS of urea, through Indian Overseas Bank. The L/C was confirmed by Union Bank of Switzerland, Indian Overseas Bank as per instructions of Union Bank of Switzerland, remitted the amounts through Chase Manhattan Bank, New York who froze this amount, the entire

quantity of urea was received by MMTC in April 1996. Indian Overseas Bank has taken up the release of above money to the National Oil Company, Libya through the Ministry of External Affairs. MMTC has no further liability or role in this transaction.

Trade related intellectual property rights

1522. SHRI SUNDER SINGH BHANDARI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased state:

(a) whether India has violated the agreement on trade related intellectual property rights in case of agricultural, chemical and pharmaceuticals by not accepting patent applications immediately on the conclusion of Uruguay Round;

(b) if so, the consequences likely to follow; and

(c) in what manner Government propose to deal with them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) In pursuance of the provisions of the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Dispute (DSU) and the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs Agreement) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), a panel has been established to examine a complaint by the USA which alleges the absence in India of either patent protection for pharmaceutical and agricultural chemical products or formal systems that permit the filing of patent application for such products and that permit the grant of exclusive marketing rights in such products.

(b) and (c) The proceedings under the DSU of the WTO are underway. The Government proposes to participate actively in the process to defend its interests.

Information of Export Import Prices

1523. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have evolved any mechanism to keep up-to-date information about the current export-import prices of items at the international level;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) The Ministry of Commerce does not keep up-to-date information about the current import-export prices at the international level since the Ministry does not itself import or export any commodity. However, depending on commodities of export or import interest to them, public sector trading companies like the State Trading Corporation (STC) and Minerals & Metals Trading Corporation (MMTC) keep tract of international price movements of items of their trade interest.

Techniques of Shrimp Farming

1524. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) has successfully demonstrated Eco-friendly and stress free culture techniques of shrimp farming;

(b) if so, whether this technique is being spread over to other shrimp form areas; and

(c) if so, the results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Wide publicity has been given to the techniques reaching enterpreneurs and farmers.

(c) During the year 1996-97 MPEDA